I: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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101 because they have among them no such remnants of perishing tribes, appear
648 to know nothing of this fivefold group, but they recognize their close relationship to the Arapaho. There is no very great amount of intercourse between them and the Arapaho at present, nor does there appear to have been any unusual amount of communication during the greater part of the nineteenth century; but on both sides there is a mutual recognition as of separated relatives. The Arapaho are now and apparently have been for a long time considerably the larger tribe, the Gros Ventre having always in
[161] historical times been regarded as a small body. Their present number is about 550.

131 According to Hayden, the Gros Ventre, about 1800, were south of the
648 Saskatchewan; about 1820 they united with the Arapaho for a few years, and then, following a quarrel, journeyed north, had a disastrous encounter with the Crow, and became neighbors and allies of the Blackfeet.[1] In spite of the usually close association of the Gros Ventre with the three Blackfoot tribes since that time, they became hostile to them for a time, about forty years ago, and united against them with their own long-standing enemies the Crow. In the course of this hostility the Gros Ventre sustained their heaviest reverse in war within their memory; the greater part of an unusually large war-party, including many Crow, being killed after an attack on a Piegan camp. This happened in 1867, according to Grinnell. The usual enemies of the Gros Ventre, besides the Crow, were other Siouan tribes, such as the Dakota and especially the Assiniboine. They also fought more or less with the Shoshone, and no doubt in alliance with the Blackfeet against the Salish Flathead. They were on the whole friendly with the tribes of their own stock of speech, the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, and Cree. The habitat of the Gros Ventre in recent times has been the Milk River territory, in which is situated their present reservation, which they occupy jointly with the Assiniboine.

The Gros Ventre have also been called Fall, Rapid, and Paunch Indians.
101 The term "Gros Ventre" has also been applied to the Minitari, a Siouan village tribe on the Missouri; and the two tribes have been distinguished as "Gros Ventre of the Prairie" and "Gros Ventre of the Missouri."

174 Gros Ventre tradition brings the tribe from the north; but their story of
131 the division of the tribe while crossing the ice on a great river is found also
[173] among the Blackfeet and the Cheyenne, and is worthless as historical evidence. While their earliest habitat known is north of their present territory, acquaintance of them goes back little more than a century, and there is

[1] See the excellent article by H. L. Scott on The Early History and the Names of the Arapaho, in the American Anthropologist, N.S., IX, 545, 1907. From this it appears that, at least from the middle of the eighteenth century on, except for about five years' association with the Arapaho (from 1818 to 1823), the habitat of the Gros Ventre was in the Blackfoot country, between the Saskatchewan and the Missouri.

INTRODUCTION

The Algonquian-speaking Gros Ventres live on the Fort Belknap Reservation in North Central Montana. The Reservation is a small part of the land claimed by this tribe in 1887, when the boundaries were finally fixed. At present, the Gros Ventres number between a thousand and eleven hundred, and they share their territory with almost as many Assiniboine. The latter tribe was included in the settlement of the Reservation although it did not participate with the Gros Ventres and Blackfoot tribes in the Treaty of 1855. In spite of some intermarriage, the two groups have never really blended and the Gros Ventres tend to center at the village of Hays at the southern part of the Reservation while the Assinboine are clustered around Lodge Pole, a settlement some ten miles east of Hays. The Indian Agency is approximately forty miles north of Hays at the northern boundary of the Reservation and close to the town of Harlem on the Great Northern Railroad. Of importance to the Gros Ventres, who are predominantly Roman Catholic, is St. Paul's Mission and School which lie at the foot of the Little Rockies only a mile south of Hays. David Rodnick has given an excellent description of the geographical setting of the Reservation for his study of modern conditions and of acculturation among the Fort Belknap Assiniboine.

Of the several tribes in the Northern Plains region, the Gros Ventres are perhaps the least known. Although they maintained intact their tribal identity, and were recognized as fierce warriors, they were often mistakenly identified with the Blackfoot tribes, with whom they were frequently allied. Moreover, little was known of the Gros Ventre language except that it was an exceedingly difficult one; practically every independent observer during the nineteenth century remarks on this fact. Since, however, many Gros Ventre men knew Blackfoot, the linguistic difference was often overlooked and the Gros Ventres tended to be counted as one of the Blackfoot tribes. As part of the so-called "Blackfoot Nation," leaders of the Gros Ventres signed the Treaty of 1855.

[P. viii contains no text]

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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175 posts accessible to the Blackfoot and to the Gros Ventres. So long as the Cree and the friendly Assiniboine were appreciably 648 better armed than the other tribes on the northern plains, the traders had little to fear. But now, with the acquisition of more guns by the buffalo hunters, and with the increasing appetite of the latter, not only for still more firearms but for other items, especially spiritous liquors, they became more and more troublesome and it was necessary to fortify the trading posts.

Since the demand was mainly for beaver, and the Cree were the real trappers, they were particularly favored by the traders. Umfreville (1784–88) complains that both the Gros Ventres and the Blackfoot tribes bring in by far too many wolf skins, and says specifically of the Gros Ventres that they seem not yet initiated into the manner of hunting and killing beaver, dressing skins and killing small peltry.[36] Mackenzie from his observations in 1789 gives the impression that the buffalo hunters were little interested in trading at the posts, and states that the part of the Gros Ventres, who were with the Assiniboine on the plains near the central portion of the Assiniboine River, prepared fresh and dried buffalo meat and tallow, along with a few buffalo robes and wolf skins, to exchange for "arms and ammunition, rum, tobacco, knives and various baubles," with those who go to traffic with them.[37]

175 Mackenzie gives also the relative position and size of the northern plains groups. Some Cree-Assiniboine are mentioned by him as being at Nepawi and South Branch House, and whose territory extends upward about to the Eagle Hills. Next to them are the Cree about eighty tents and on the other side of the river their number may be 200. Mandelbaum cites this evidence to show that at this time the Cree were along the north Saskatchewan, but had not yet consolidated their position there.[38] Mackenzie goes on to say that at the southern headwaters of the North Saskatchewan dwell the Sarsi, 35 tents, 120 men; opposite to those [161] eastward on the headwaters of the South Branch are the Piegan, 1200–1500 men; next to them on the same water, are the Blood,

[36] Umfreville, p. 198.
[37] Mackenzie, v. 1, pp. cxi, ciii.
[38] Mandelbaum, pp. 181–82.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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50 tents or 250 men; next to them downward extend the Blackfeet, their number may be 800 men; next to them and who extend to the confluence of the South and North branch, are the Fall or Big Bellied Indians, who may amount to about 600 warriors.[29]

Dislocation and Warfare (1790–1830)

Within a decade of the time of Mackenzie's observations, however, the Gros Ventres were being ousted from between the forks of the Saskatchewan where they had been apparently well established since at least 1772, when Cocking met them.[30] Undoubtedly the Gros Ventres were greatly weakened by the smallpox epidemic of 1780, as Wissler has suggested.[31] In any case they were subsequently pushed south and east by the allied Assiniboine and Cree, who had the great advantage of being relatively well-armed with guns. Thus the Gros Ventres were launched on the most turbulent period of their career, with enmity toward the whites as an important factor.

We know from Harmon how bitterly the Gros Ventres resented the more favorable treatment accorded the Cree-Assiniboine by the traders. He was at Alexandria, a Northwest Company post on the Assiniboine River, and records on June 10, 1801, the following: "It is currently reported and believed that the Rapid Indians are forming a war party to come against the Indians of this quarter, whom they consider, and I think with sufficient reason, as their enemies. If they come this way they will fall on us as upon the natives themselves, for they say that we furnish the Cree and Assiniboine with what firearms they want, while they get few."[32] Although this particular attack on the post did not materialize, there was real reason to have feared it. In the summer of 1793 the Gros Ventres attacked old fort Brulé (South Branch House) and killed all but one of the twenty or so inhabitants; in 1794 they pillaged Manchester House. These two

[29] Mackenzie, v. 1, p. cx.

[30] O. Lewis p. 12, places them East of the South Branch prior to about 1750.

[31] Wissler, 1936, p. 18. Cf. interesting tradition of the ravages of the epidemic, pp. 34–36.

[32] Harmon, p. 51.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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robes,—that the Gros Ventres were industrious and were as good skin-dressers as the Mandan and better than the Blackfoot. He further mentions that they were formerly numerous and dreaded but that since the smallpox, and the depredations by the tribes with whom they have been at variance, they had diminished. Although they formerly had bloody wars with the Blackfoot tribes, in 1808 they were at peace with them.

Henry's estimate, however, that at this time the Gros Ventres numbered but 80 tents or 240 men, seems very low.[38] He was probably basing his figures on those who came that far north to trade, because in 1805 Laroque, while with the Crow on an island in the Missouri River near the confluence of the Big Horn, met a delegation of the Gros Ventres who were camped on the Big Horn River behind the mountain. He states that they occupied 275–300 "huts" and that it was with friendly sentiments that they came to this region. They brought words of peace and said that they came to procure some horses from the Crow. Laroque referred to them as "Big bellies of the fort de prairie" and mentioned that they and the Crow communicated with each other by means of the sign language, not being able to understand each other in speech.[39] This makes it quite certain that these Indians were not the Hidatsa.

It would seem, then, from the above as well as from the figures obtained in the same year, 1805, by Lewis and Clark, viz. 260 tents or 660 men,[40] that the estimates of both Thompson and Henry, observing as they were from the Canadian area from which the Gros Ventres had been driven, refer to only part of the main group of Gros Ventres. Henry himself remarks in 1811 that the Gros Ventres are increasing very fast and that he had always noticed a greater percentage of young men among them than among the neighboring tribes. He admits further: "I have not been able to obtain their exact number but am fully confident they exceed 100 tents."[41] Richardson, moreover, in his journal of 1818–19, identifies the Gros Ventres and claims that they have about 450 to 500 tents.[42]

[38] Henry, v. 2, pp. 530–31.
[39] Laroque, p. 20.
[40] Cf. Wissler, 1936, p. 4.
[41] Henry, v. 2, p. 733.
[42] Richardson, quoted in Franklin, pp. 99–100.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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Crow were in the vicinity, camped at a place through which the first contingent of Crow had already passed. Four young men from the second division of Crow were attempting to catch up with the first when they came across the Gros Ventres camp, thinking they had reached their goal. The Gros Ventres seized and killed three of these young men, but the fourth escaped to warn his people, who laid in ambush at a narrow pass through which the Gros Ventres would go. Taking the Gros Ventres by surprise, they completely demoralized them, killing 67 and capturing twice that many women and children. The remainder fled and reached safety with the Blackfoot, leaving the wounded where they lay.

Readjustment (1830–1870)

That the whole Gros Ventres tribe could have gone south to the Arapaho, remained a few years, and suffered such disasters in 1832, is highly improbable. First of all, it is unlikely that if the whole tribe disappeared from their usual habitat they would have been able to regain their territory from encroachments by Assiniboine from the east and northeast, by Crow from the south, and by Piegan and Blackfoot from the west and northwest. Furthermore it is equally unlikely that such absence would have been unnoted by Catlin who in 1832, at the American Fur Company Post at the mouth of the Yellowstone, gives a reasonable estimate of the Gros Ventre population (430 lodges) and notes the common error of traders in counting that tribe indiscriminately with the Blackfoot groups, in spite of the difference between the Blackfoot and Gros Ventre language.[51] Moreover, according to Maximilian, Mitchell of the American Fur Company affirmed in 1833 that he had always done business with the Gros Ventres with pleasure, and had never had any proof of the treachery imputed to them. Had there been no Gros Ventres around for five years, Mitchell would no doubt have mentioned that fact. The entire feeling of Maximilian's account is that the Gros Ventres were well known to American Fur Company traders—as compared to some Blackfoot proper, who arrived at the fort and were unknown.[52]

Finally, native tradition gives some negative evidence. Our

[51] Catlin, v. 1, pp. 59–60.
[52] Maximilian, pp. 73, 154.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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over the area. The Gros Ventres had the benefit of buffalo hunting a trifle longer than the other groups. All the buffalo in Montana were in February, 1882, in their territory, between the Milk River and the Bear Paw Mountains. The hunting season, of October 1882 to February 1883, finished the annihilation of the great northern herd and left only stragglers, merely a few thousands.[70] By August, 1883, both the Blackfoot and the Crow Agencies reported that all game was gone from their respective reservations, and a letter from the Fort Belknap Agency stated that game there "was practically exhausted."[71] In 1884 the Blackfoot and Crow agencies reported that the buffalo was extinct.[72] After ceding more land, in 1888 the limits of the Fort Belknap Reservation, which the Gros Ventres share with the Assiniboine, were finally fixed.[73]

Missionary endeavors, carried on by the Jesuit Fathers, had begun in earnest only in 1885. Prior to that time contact with missionaries had been sporadic. Father Point in 1846–47 had been well received and sent in a good report of this tribe. When Father Giorda attempted to go among them in 1862, however, Bull Lodge took him prisoner and stripped him of his possessions. Since his captivity did not last longer than a few weeks, and his property was restored to him, several months later he made another attempt. This time, while there was some opposition at first, he was permitted to baptize over a hundred children. Subsequently Fathers Rappagliosi and Grassi made several visits respectively, and at considerable intervals. Finally, after some preliminary negotiations, Father Ebershweiler established permanent residence in 1885, and the school at St. Paul's was opened in 1887. The mission and school flourished. In 1891 the founder was replaced by Father Flusi, assisted by Father Sansome.[74]

The Gros Ventres population—always small, relative to that of surrounding tribes—was steadily declining. Hayden's estimate of 1853 placed the total at 2520.[75] In 1883, at the time of the

[70] Hornaday, pp. 492, 506, 510–11.
[71] Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1883–1915, pp. lx, 98.
[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 109.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 295.
[74] Palladino, pp. 187, 195–96, 230, 232, 235.
[75] Hayden, p. 344. Gros Ventres today claim their number was then 10,000.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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175 disappearance of the buffalo, the population was officially recorded
● 161 as being 970. By 1895 it had been reduced to 596.[78] At this low
[554] ebb, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was still a strong feeling among the Gros Ventres against the white man's
[178] dress; as of old, a man's wealth and standing still was measured by the number of horses he owned. Nevertheless the ceremonial aspects of their culture, already on the wane before that decade, had practically disappeared.

[78] *Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs 1883-1915*, pp. 101, 188.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
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stakes, but not for really large ones. A gambling game between two brothers-in-law, small though the stakes had to be, was a good show for the onlookers—not, however, nearly so good as one between two prominent enemy friends. Two sisters-in-law were also "just right" for gambling against each other.

Through all these three relationships run two currents: one of mutual goodwill and helpfulness, the other of familiarity, "teasing" and twitting. Between two brothers-in-law and two sisters-in-law there is relatively more of the first and less of the second; between brother-in-law and sister-in-law relatively more of the second and less of the first.

Two brothers-in-law could not discuss sex or vulgarity and could not go to the toilet together. They would be helpful to each other in giving presents, in a building project, in business matters, and so forth. But on the other hand they could go quite far in "humiliating" each other, in indulging in practical jokes and horse play at the other's expense, and in rivaling each other in war and in war-deed matching contests—but not to the limit, not so far as enemy friends could go. Two sisters-in-law could likewise "tease" each other, but could not go to the same length that brothers-in-law could go.

To her brother-in-law (sister's husband or husband's brother) a woman could go nearly any length in "teasing" and freedom in the way of crude horse play and of vulgar and obscene talk, and vice versa.

The gambling rule that prevailed, and still prevails largely, between these three types of siblings-in-law, namely, gambling for small stakes permitted and encouraged, but not for large stakes, appears to be genetically related to the two currents we have been discussing: the goodwill one prohibiting stakes whose loss would really hurt, the familiarity one permitting and provoking small-stake gambling.

The Gros Ventre, with a population range of between about 800 and 2,000 in the second half of the last century, were divided into about a dozen bands. These bands were not sibs proper, but each was composed largely of kin related by blood or marriage. Members of a given band, whether related or not, would not gamble against one another. There was a well-marked we-feeling among the members of a band, somewhat distinct from and additional to the kinship feeling proper. Actually this was almost equivalent to "tribal" we-feeling, for each band was for the greater part of the year, particularly in the winter months when the bands scattered to separate quarters within the tribal territory, an almost completely autonomous economico-political unit, and any band was free if it wished to secede from the tribe at any time, temporarily or permanently.